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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Society Studies Centre (MADA ssc), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 February 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Challenges of Human Rights in Sudan

During the recent few years Sudan faced serious challenges in the field of human rights. These can be summed up as follows:

First: the persisting war in Darfur, South Kurdofan and the Blue Nile states constituted the most serious challenge to the situation of Human Rights in Sudan. Despite signing of Darfur Peace Agreement in Doha and the accession of many armed movements thereto, and despite continuing negotiations on the conflict settlement in South Kurdofan and the Blue Nile states, the continuation of war from the part of Darfur armed movements non-signatory to the Peace Agreement and from the part of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – Northern Sector as well, had resulted in the most serious violations committed by these movements against the International Humanitarian Law and aggravated the sufferings of the people in these areas.

Second: The aggravating negative impacts of the unilateral coercive measures on the Sudanese citizen prevented him from enjoying his fundamental rights. The US Administration persistently imposes annually renewed economic sanctions on Sudan since 1997 forming one of the gravest violations of the international law and norm.

Third: The exacerbating burden of foreign debt has negatively influenced human rights situations in Sudan. In spite of the fact that Sudan had met all the conditions required for debt relief under the HIPC Initiative, it was never given the opportunity to get the advantage of that initiative. As a result thereof, poverty and unemployment rates increased in Sudan and the fundamental rights of the Sudanese people to education, health and development were harmed considerably.

Despite all these challenges, situation of human rights in Sudan kept moving forward in notable progress through the recent years. A considerable development was made in the field of human rights- related legislations and laws. Such development was confirmed further by the Bill of Rights embodied in the 2005 National Constitution in addition to the progress made in establishing the mechanisms needed for protecting and enhancing human rights in Sudan. Generally, the development realized can be summed up in the following:

- Success in encountering and overcoming the obstacles ensued after cessation of South Sudan in a manner that allowed for constructing smooth relations between the two countries. By virtue of such success, Sudan has now become an acceptable mediator between the two conflicting parties in the Republic of South Sudan.
- Establishing the National Human Rights Commission as an independent body concerned with human rights. The Commission is currently operating in a completely independent and objective manner.
- Laying out a national plan for human rights, with the participation of civil society, to act as a guide to the State in human rights-related issues
- Developing legislations organizing several aspects of human rights such as the Law on Combating Human Trafficking, to which several CSOs have substantially contributed and which was entered into force in October 2013, in addition to other legislations concerned with maternal and child health (MACH) and the amendment to the National Elections Act.
- Organizing community-based campaigns to combat female genital mutilation (circumcision) which resulted in reducing the rate of such practice considering its tight association with deeply rooted social traditions and concepts.
- Pushing forward women's political status demonstrated by adopting substantial amendments to the National Elections Act and by virtue of which women were given greater participation in the process increasing their representation, by way of positive discrimination, from 25% to 30% in compliance with the international standards.
- Re-forming the National Elections Commission through consensus and amend National Elections Act to guarantee greater participation of different political parties to enhance democracy, good governance and peace.
- Embark on the dialogue process initiated by the President of the Republic and for which an independent mechanism was constituted. All social activities, intellectual and political currents were invited to participate in the dialogue to enhance democracy, disseminate freedom and protect human rights.

- Continuing the negotiation process between the government and armed movements on the issue of South Kurdofan and the Blue Nile.

Within the context viewed above, the Society Studies Centre SSC demands and calls for the following:

First: the Center commends all the past resolutions accredited by the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly concerning human rights and the unilateral coercive measures. We especially commend the HRC Resolution No 27/L2 appointing a Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, hoping that his efforts will bring an end to the sufferings of many nations harmed by such measures. Being one of these nations, Sudan which remained under the US coercive measures all through the last twenty years had seriously suffered their negative impact on all sectors and segments of the society. The greater burden fell on the nation of the country rather than any other part and prevented them from enjoying their fundamental rights. We look forward to the contribution of this session in appointing a thematic rapporteur who enjoys a strong personality that allows him detect the negative impacts of these coercive measures on Sudan.

Second: We call upon the Secretary- General to extend every necessary support to the Special Rapporteur on the Negative Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures to enable him carry out his duty in an efficient manner especially by furnishing him with sufficient material and human resources.

Third: We call upon your esteemed Council to work for Sudan accession to the HIPC Initiative and relieve Sudan debt to enable its nation enjoy the rights guaranteed by the International Law of Human Rights.

Fourth: We call upon the various armed forces in Sudan to resort to peace and engage in the democratic process via participation in the general elections currently in progress as a peaceful and democratic means for transfer of power.